

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

February 7, 2012

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S DENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

February is National Children's Dental Health Month. In 1949, the American Dental Association held the first national observance of Children's Dental Health Day. In 1981, the program was extended to a month-long celebration, known today as National Children's Dental Health Month, to support dental health awareness throughout the United States.

Poor oral health, specifically tooth decay, is the **most common chronic childhood disease**. Left untreated, pain and infection caused by tooth decay can lead to problems in eating, speaking and learning; can damage a child's self-esteem; or, in the worse case, result in serious infections in other parts of a child's body with fatal consequences. Although most dental problems can be easily diagnosed and treated, a recent survey found that 1 in 10 of Los Angeles County's children, of whom 1 in 5 children are between the ages of 2 and 5, have never been to a dentist.

To address these alarming statistics, under my 2011 Chairmanship of First 5 LA, I oversaw the solicitation and release of \$17.8 million dollars in funding opportunities under the "Oral Health and Nutrition Expansion and Enhancement Project," to expand and enhance dental service access to Los Angeles County children, ages birth to 5, in their communities.

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RIDLEY-THOMAS	_____
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ANTONOVICH	_____
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Project-funded initiatives include:

- Strategic partnerships with clinics, health centers, dental schools and health plans;
- A Dental Health Improvement Project that includes tele-dentistry and mobile dentistry at schools, WIC and Head Start centers; and
- The establishment of Dental Homes at community clinics, with an emphasis on preventative and restorative dental services.

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors takes an active role in promoting the importance of a healthy lifestyle so that children get a good start on a lifetime of healthy teeth and gums. Accordingly, throughout each February, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, in partnership with community-based organizations, dental societies, local dental providers and schools, coordinates countywide activities, such as:

1. Public education to enhance the oral health literacy of our communities and to raise parents' awareness of the importance of developing good habits at an early age; avoiding frequent and high intake of sugar; and ensuring regular preventive dental visits and regimens; and
2. Direct services, such as oral screenings and applications of sealants and fluoride varnishes for thousands of children.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors:

1. Proclaims the month of February 2012 as "National Children's Dental Health Month" throughout Los Angeles County in recognition of the many activities promoting children's dental health; and
2. Supports County departments in promoting a healthy lifestyle for employees and their children, including encouraging dental screenings and following the oral health care instructions from their dental care providers.

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